**UNITED NATIONS** **S**

**Security Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/1263
17 December 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

# LETTER DATED 17 DECEMBER 1999 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Since the arrival of the international presences in Kosovo and Metohija, the autonomous province of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, this Serbian province has witnessed not only the loss of Serbian lives, but also a systematic destruction of the Serbian cultural heritage and the demolition of the churches, monasteries and other shrines of the Serbian Orthodox Church in areas in which the Serbian people has lived for centuries. This "cultural cleansing" is the most heinous crime of the eradication of historical and spiritual roots of a nation, an "ethnic cleansing" of the most hideous type. Regrettably, the destruction of cultural heritage may not be an altogether new phenomenon in the turbulent history of the Balkans; what is striking this time around, however, is that these atrocities have taken place under the auspices of the international community.

Since the deployment of the international security force (KFOR) and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) supposedly to maintain peace, the destruction and desecration of Orthodox religious shrines in Kosovo and Metohija by ethnic Albanians has assumed added ferocity, motivated by nationalist hatred and religious intolerance. Albanian terrorists and extremists have set about destroying each and every trace of Serbian existence in these areas, irrespective of its significance as cultural heritage of a nation and of Europe as a whole. They are doing it in a deliberate and premeditated way and do not choose means: they dynamite, they bomb, they mine.

Serbian Orthodox shrines are an important part of the sacral cultural heritage of Yugoslavia. They make up one specific whole of the entire cultural heritage of the Serbian people. Most of them have been preserved by the reconstruction of much older, often ancient churches and monasteries on which the winds of war or the passage of time have taken a toll. Built to fulfil religious and cultural needs, the churches and monasteries exemplify the Serbian-Byzantine architecture of the period, as well as the presence of the Serbian people in these areas since very early times.

According to the available data, corroborated also by statements of the representatives of UNMIK, 76 Orthodox churches, chapels, monasteries and other religious shrines have been vandalized since the deployment of KFOR and UNMIK.

Serbian Orthodox churches in Prizren, Orahovac, Djakovica, Vucitrn, Samodreza, Velika Reka, Donji Zakut, Musutiste have been burned; attempts have been made to burn down the Metropolitan's residence in Pec and the Church of the Holy Saviour in Pristina; the church and gothic frescoes at Dolac, the medieval mosaics at Kijevo and the renaissance chapel of St. Nicholas and the cathedral church in Djakovica have been demolished, as well as the monastery of St. Mark at Korisa and the church at Rekovac. Over 10,000 icons and other sacral objects have been looted or destroyed. The Serbian Orthodox clergy in the monastery of Devic have been terrorized (one nun has been raped), as well as in the Church of St. Nicholas in Pristina and in the monastery at Gorioc near Istok whose nuns have been expelled. Tens of thousands of books in the Serbian language and a large number of foreign books from various arts and sciences have been burned.

The Serbian Patriarch, His Holiness Paul, warned on behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the guardian of the national and cultural-historic identity of the Serbian people, of the most recent, scandalous intent of Albanian extremists to seize and appropriate the episcopal church of St. Mary of Ljeviska in Prizren and the monastery of Holy Archangels in an attempt to deny their Christian and Serbian origins and attribute them Albanian ones. The attempt to seize and appropriate the Serbian holiest shrines, rationalized by some Albanian scholars and historians, is only another form of aggression directed at the fundaments of the Serbian faith and nation.

The vandalism of Albanian terrorists and extremists is not met with appropriate measures and actions by KFOR and UNMIK, whose task is to provide effective protection and security to Serbs and Montenegrins, as well as other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. Their passivity and, by extension, complicity in the commission of the acts of vandalism increase the feelings of fear and insecurity among the Serbs and other non-Albanians and are instrumental in perpetuating their exodus from Kosovo and Methohija.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has earnestly hoped that its appeals and requests to the international community to protect the cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija would result in a timely and effective international protection of this cultural treasure. Regrettably, such protection has failed to materialize, just as similar appeals and requests by numerous Yugoslav and international expert organizations have been met with inaction and indifference.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, I am writing to you with a request that the Security Council take most urgent measures to protect the religious and cultural shrines of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Methohija, the testaments of its presence and identity in these areas, effectively and without delay. In order to do so, the Security Council should implement appropriate mechanisms of international protection of cultural heritage.

In particular, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia requests that the monks and nuns and the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church return to their churches and monasteries and that expert teams of conservationists be allowed to access the sites, assess the damage and propose reconstruction and protection measures to save the historic, cultural and artistic heritage of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija which is of universal significance.

/...

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIC
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex

LIST OF DESTROYED AND DESECRATED SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA (JUNE TO OCTOBER 1999)

1. Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Musutiste
2. Church of the Holy Virgin, Musutiste
3. Monastery of St. Mark, Korisa near Prizren
4. Monastery of St. Gabriel, Binac near Vitina
5. Monastery of Devic, near Srbica
6. Monastery of St. Uros, Sarenik, Gornje Nerodimlje
7. Monastery of Holy Archangels, Gornje Nerodimlje
8. Church of St. Nicholas, Donje Nerodimlje
9. Church of St. Stephen, Donje Nerodimlje
10. Church dedicated to the Entrance of St. Mary into the Temple, Dolac near Klina
11. Church of St. Nicholas, Slovinje near Lipljan
12. Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Suva Reka
13. Church of the Holy Trinity, Petric near Pec
14. Church of the Holy Virgin, Belo Polje near Pec
15. Cathedral Church of St. Uros, Urosevac
16. Church of St. Elijah, Vucitrn
17. Church of St. John the Baptist, Samodreza near Vucitrn
18. Church of St. Paraskeva, Drsnik near Pec
19. Church of St. Mary, Naklo near Pec
20. Church of the Holy Trinity, Velika Reka near Vucitrn
21. Church of the Holy Apostles, Petrovac near Kosovska Kamenica
22. Church of St. Mary, Podgorce near Vitina
23. Church of St. John the Baptist, Pecka Banja
24. Church of St. Mary, Djurakovac near Pec
25. Church of the Holy Trinity, Djakovica
26. Church of St. Nicholas, Osojane near Pec
27. Church of St. Elijah, Bistrazin near Djakovica
28. Church of St. Demetrius, Siga near Pec
29. Parish Church of St. Nicholas, Zegra near Gnjilane
30. Church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, Novake near Prizren
31. Church dedicated to the Entrance of St. Mary into the Temple, Veliko Krusevo
32. Monastery of Zociste and the church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, Zociste
33. Parish Church, Grmovo near Vitina
34. Church of St. Nicholas, Kijevo near Klina
35. Church of St. Mark, Klina
36. Church of St. Nicholas, Ljubizda near Prizren
37. Church of St. Elijah, Ljubizda near Prizren
38. Church of St. Paraskeva, Dobrcane near Gnjilane
39. Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour, Pristina
40. Church of St. Elijah, Smac near Prizren
41. Church of St. Basil the Great, Srbica near Prizren
42. Church of St. Paraskeva, Zaskok near Urosevac
43. Church of St. Nicholas, Gatnje near Urosevac
44. Church of St. Mary, Donje Nerodimlje

45. Church of St. Elijah, Nekodim near Urosevac
46. Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Talinovac near Urosevac
47. Church of the Holy Trinity, Babljak near Urosevac
48. Church dedicated to the Birth of St. Mary, Softovic near Urosevac
49. Church of the Holy Prophet Elijah, Kacanik
50. Church of St. Mary, Korisa near Prizren
51. Church of St. Jeremiah, Grebnik near Klina
52. Church of the Holy Prince Lazar, Kos near Istok
53. Church of the Holy Trinity, Zitinje near Vitina
54. Church of St. Paraskeva, Klokot near Vitina
55. Church of St. Lazar, Belica near Istok
56. Church of the Holy Prophet Elijah, Pomazatin near Pristina
57. Church of St. George, Rudnik near Srbica
58. Church of Holy Trinity, Donja Ratisa near Decani
59. Church of the Holy Apostle Luke, Vitomirica near Pec
60. Church of St. Elijah, Podujevo
61. Church of the Holy Apostles, Gornja Pakastica near Podujevo
62. Chapel at the Serbian Cemetery, Kosovska Mitrovica
63. Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Istok
64. Church of St. Nicholas, Prizren
65. Church of the Holy Saviour, Dvorani near Musutiste
66. Church of St. Nicholas, Lokvice near Prizren
67. Church of the Holy Prince Lazar, Piskote near Djakovica
68. Church of St. Paraskeva, Binac near Vitina
69. Church of St. Paraskeva, Gojbulja near Vucitrn
70. Church of St. Nicholas, Stimlje
71. Church of the Holy Archangel Michael, Stimlje
72. Church of the Holy Saviour, Miciceva Mahala, Prizrenski Podgor
73. Church of St. Paraskeva, near Musutiste
74. Church of the Holy Archangel, Musutiste
75. Memorial to the Battle of Kosovo
76. Church at Zakut near Podujevo

Number of destroyed and desecrated Serbian Orthodox shrines per area of responsibility:

21 USA
21 Italy
17 Germany
10 United Kingdom
7 France

---